



WORKSHOP

TRUTH, POLITICS, AND SUBJECTIVITY IN LATE SOCIALISM AND ITS AFTERMATH

24 May 2018, European University Institute

Sala dei Levrieri – Villa Salviati, Via Bolognese 156, 50139 Firenze

ABSTRACT

In literature as well as in politics, public figures of the late socialist era were obsessed with sincerity. How did “truth” work in the self-fashioning of intellectuals, authors, and politicians of the USSR and its satellites? To what extent did an engagement with the idea of personal sincerity or collective honesty inform their thoughts and actions? How has the rhetoric of sincerity, truth and post-truth interacted with the traumatic memories of socialism and the post-socialist transition? What was the relationship between sincerity and humanist ideas in Eastern Europe, and how can drawing attention to this heritage help explain the region's present-day politics?



PROGRAMME

10:00

Keynote Talk - Sincerity and Truth in (Post-)Soviet Russia

Ellen Rutten (University of Amsterdam)

Both in the twentieth century and in today's post-truth era, we see a persistent infatuation with truthfulness and sincere expression among Russian intellectuals, artists, and politicians. How does this rhetoric work in the public self-fashioning of such drastically diverse public figures as Stalin, Brezhnev, Dmitrii Prigov, and Pussy Riot? And what lessons does the Soviet story of sincerity teach us about measuring and controlling sincere behavior in the political arena?

Chair: Alexander Etkind (EUI)

11:30

Lunch Break

13:30

Keynote Talk - The Structure of the Self: The Case of the Early Post-Stalin Years

Anatoly Pinsky (European University at St.Petersburg)

In the first years after the death of Joseph Stalin, in 1953, Soviet writers published a number of literary works and essays that promoted concepts such as “individuality,” “authenticity,” “self-expression,” and “sincerity.” In this paper, a draft chapter of his work in progress, *Soviet Individuality: A Study of Self and Form*, Anatoly Pinsky explores what unified these concepts, among the most important in the cultural and intellectual history of the Soviet Union. Based on a reading of published texts by key figures such as Aleksandr Tvardovskii, Ol’ga Berggol’ts, and Vladimir Pomerantsev, as well as select personal papers, Pinsky argues these concepts shared a discourse of the self as having depths that contained a particular source of knowledge. In 1954, a number of the published texts would be criticized in the Soviet press; several figured in a Central Committee resolution. In a context in which many writers respected the Soviet leaders, whom they tasked with facilitating the exploration of depths, the official position presented a significant problem. Thereafter, the discourse in the personal papers changes; the writers return from the depths to the surface of their selves. Pinsky examines what this episode of the early post-Stalin era tells us about the structure of the Soviet self.

Chair: Pavel Khazanov (EUI- Max Weber Fellow)

15.00

Second Session

Uladzimir Valodzin (EUI- PhD Researcher): *Self-Styling Through Imaginary Belonging to Dissidents: Uladzimir Niakliajeu's "Autamat z haziroukaj z siropam i biez" and Kim Khadeev's Circle*

Adrian-George Matus (EUI- PhD Researcher): *The Spectra of 1968 in Hungary*

17.00

Break

17.15

Third session

Veneta Ivanova (EUI- Max Weber Fellow): <*TBA*>

Pavel Khazanov (EUI- Max Weber Fellow): *Cool Sincerity: Vladimir Sappak's Humanism on Soviet TV*